
Transportation Committee

HB 2718

Brief Description: Addressing the desirability of reasonable fares for frequent ferry users.

Sponsors: Representatives Appleton, Rolfes, Lantz, Cody, Eddy, Kenney, Quall, McIntire, Haigh, Seaquist, Eickmeyer, Linville, Ericks, Roberts, VanDeWege, Morris, Dickerson, Kessler, Bailey, Smith, Sells, Nelson and Hasegawa.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation and the Washington State Transportation Commission to consider the desirability of reasonable fares for persons using the ferry system to commute daily to work and other frequent users who live in ferry-dependent communities when setting ferry fare and pricing policy.

Hearing Date: 2/5/08

Staff: Beth Redfield (786-7347).

Background:

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Ferries Division operates and maintains ferry vessels and terminals, constructs terminals, and acquires vessels. The system serves eight Washington counties and one Canadian province through 23 vessels and 20 terminals.

The Washington State Transportation Commission (Commission) has principal responsibility for setting ferry fares. The current fare structure for ferry riders includes discounts for frequent users. This policy reflects statutory permission (repealed in 2007) for the Commission to consider, "the desirability of reasonable rates for persons using the ferry system to commute daily to work and other frequent users who live in ferry-dependent communities."

The 2006 and 2007 transportation budgets have directed the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) to conduct a finance study of the state ferry system. The study is currently in its second phase. The study makes numerous recommendations regarding the long-term maintenance and

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preservation of both vessels and terminals and suggests approaches to more efficiently serve ferry system demand.

Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2358, enacted in 2007, directed the WSDOT and the Commission to implement recommendations of phase one of the study.

The 2007 legislation directed the WSDOT and the Commission, beginning in 2008, to develop fare and pricing policies that: (1) recognize each route is unique; (2) use data from a current customer survey; (3) are developed with input from affected ferry users; (4) generate the amount of revenue required by the biennial transportation budget; (5) consider impacts on users, capacity, and local communities; (6) keep fare schedules as simple as possible; and (7) consider options for using pricing to level vehicle peak demand and increase off-peak ridership.

Summary of Bill:

The desirability of reasonable fares for persons using the ferry system to commute daily to work and other frequent users who live in ferry-dependent communities is added to the considerations the WSDOT must make while setting fare and pricing policy.

The requirement that the Commission consider the desirability of reasonable fares for persons using the ferry system to commute daily to work and other frequent users who live in ferry-dependent communities is added to the fare setting duties of the Commission .

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.